

LISTING OF THE CLAIMS

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

1. (currently amended) An endoscope system comprising:

an endoscope having an elongated insertion unit comprising adjoining ~~whose bending section adjoins a~~ and distal sections ~~section thereof~~; and

~~[[an]]~~ a guide member for guiding the insertion unit, the insertion unit guide member having proximal and distal guide member ends and including a plurality of tubular members having varying outer diameters, each tubular member of the plurality of tubular members having proximal and distal ends and a guide channel that has of a predetermined inner diameter permitting another tubular member of said plurality passage of tubular members having smaller outer diameter and the insertion unit to pass through the guide channel, and

at least one tubular member of the plurality of tubular members having predetermined degrees of flexibility, a predetermined length and a direction changing unit operative to change ~~an~~ advancing a direction in which the insertion unit is advanced through the guide channel, wherein the insertion unit guide member is adapted to be passed through or placed in a pipe.

2. (currently amended) An endoscope system according to claim 1, wherein~~[[:]]~~ the direction changing unit is a distal cover member ~~[[attached]]~~ attachable to the distal end of the tubular member; the distal cover member ~~[[has]]~~ having a passing direction changing ~~hole whose~~ opening ~~[[is]]~~ formed in ~~[[the]]~~ a lateral side of the distal cover member; and the passing direction changing ~~hole~~ opening changes the passing direction, in which the insertion unit is passed, from ~~[[the]]~~ an axial direction of the tubular member to ~~[[the]]~~ a lateral direction thereof.

3. (currently amended) An endoscope system according to claim 1, wherein the direction changing unit comprises:

a base member located at the distal end of the tubular member; and

an operation wire having ~~[[the]]~~a wire distal end ~~thereof~~ fixed to the base member and ~~having the a wire proximal end thereof~~ extended towards the proximal guide member end ~~a hand-held portion~~.

4. (currently amended) An endoscope system according to claim 2, wherein the distal cover member ~~that is attached to the distal end of the tubular member and that serves~~ serving as ~~[[the]]~~an extremely distal portion of the insertion unit guide member includes a leading direction adjusting unit for adjusting the leading direction in which the insertion unit is led out of the passing direction changing ~~hole~~ opening.

5. (currently amended) An endoscope system according to claim 4, wherein the leading direction adjusting unit comprises:

a raiser located distally to the passing direction changing ~~hole~~ opening of the distal cover member; and

an operation wire having ~~[[the]]~~a wire distal end ~~thereof~~ fixed to the raiser and ~~having the a wire proximal end thereof~~ extended towards the proximal guide member end ~~a hand-held portion~~.

6. (currently amended) An endoscope system according to claim 3, wherein~~[[:]]~~ the tubular member comprises a tube and a braid ~~that sheathes the~~ for sheathing a periphery of the tube; and the operation wire ~~[[is]]~~being interposed between the tube and the braid and extended towards the proximal guide member end ~~hand-held portion~~.

7. (currently amended) An endoscope system according to claim 5, wherein~~[[:]]~~ the tubular member comprises a tube and a braid ~~that sheathes the~~ for sheathing a periphery of the tube; and the operation wire ~~[[is]]~~being interposed between the tube and the braid and extended towards the proximal guide member end ~~hand-held portion~~.

8. (currently amended) An endoscope system according to claim 1, wherein~~[[:]]~~ when the insertion unit guide member is being formed, the plurality of tubular members ~~[[is]]~~ being joined~~[[,]]~~ are arranged so that

~~the inner and outer diameters of the tubular members are determined so that the diameter~~ of a tubular member located on ~~[[a]]~~the distal guide member end side will be smaller than the inner and outer diameters that of a tubular member located on the proximal guide member end a hand-held portion side; and

~~the lengths of the tubular members are determined so that the~~ a length of the tubular member located on the distal guide member end side will be are greater than that of the tubular member located on the proximal guide member end hand-held portion side; and

~~the degrees of flexibility of the tubular members are determined so that the tubular member located on the distal guide member end side will be~~ are softer than the ~~one tubular member located on the proximal guide member end hand-held portion side~~.

9. (currently amended) An endoscope system according to claim 1, wherein~~[[:]]~~ the tubular member comprises a tube and a braid that sheathes ~~[[the]]~~a periphery of the tube; and a tool tubular member for maintaining through which a tool can lie is the tool tubular member being interposed between the tube and the braid.

10. (currently amended) An endoscope system according to claim 1, wherein~~[[:]]~~ a balloon that changes from a contracted state to a dilated state or vice versa is located at the middle of the tubular member; ~~[[and]]~~ when ~~the balloon is dilated~~, the ~~dilated~~ balloon comes into close contact with the wall of ~~[[a]]~~the pipe, and the tubular member is locked at a predetermined position in the pipe.

11. (currently amended) An endoscope system according to claim 1, wherein the tubular member ~~to be~~ being passed through the pipe comprises:
a plurality of juxtaposed tubes; and
a braid sheathing the juxtaposed tubes.

12. (currently amended) An endoscope system according to claim 1, further comprising:
a drum, ~~about which the insertion unit is wound~~ about the drum, ~~and which has the drum~~
having a controller, which controls the controller controlling the bending section[[,]] incorporated
in [[the]]~~a center of the bore thereof~~, and
a support for ~~supporting~~ enabling the drum to ~~so that the drum can~~ freely rotate.

13. (currently amended) An endoscope system according to claim 1, wherein[[:]] ~~the~~
~~endoscope has an elongated insertion unit that includes a distal section in which an observational~~
~~optical system and an illumination optical system are incorporated~~ in the distal section of the
insertion unit,

~~a bending section that adjoins the distal section, and a flexible tube that adjoins the~~
~~bending section, that has the flexible tube including~~ a metallic braid and a tube body integrated
thereinto, and having that has a smaller outer diameter than the bending section ~~does~~; and

a guide tube having ~~which has~~ a metallic braid and a tube body integrated therein and
~~whose~~ having an outer diameter that is substantially identical to [[the]]an outer diameter of the
bending section [[is]] mounted on [[the]]a periphery of the flexible tube included in the insertion
unit so that the guide tube can slide freely.

14. (original) An endoscope system according to claim 13, wherein the insertion unit
includes an attaching/detaching means for attaching the flexible tube to the guide tube so that the
flexible tube can be freely detached from the guide tube.

15. (currently amended) An endoscope system according to claim 14, wherein the
attaching/detaching means is an elastic member that comes into close contact with [[the]]an
external surface of a base, which joins the bending section and the flexible tube, with a
predetermined holding force.

16. (currently amended) An endoscope system according to claim 13, wherein a
plurality of bosses ~~whose~~ having distal portions [[are]] shaped substantially like a sphere is
formed on [[the]]an external surface of the tube body included in each ~~of the~~ guide tube and

flexible tube.

17. (withdrawn) An endoscope system comprising:

an endoscope having an insertion unit that is elongated and that includes a distal section in which an observational optical system and an illumination optical system are incorporated, a bending section that adjoins the distal section, and a flexible tube that adjoins the bending section, that has a metallic braid and a tube body integrated thereinto, and that has a smaller outer diameter than the bending section does; and

a guide tube being mounted on the periphery of the flexible tube so that it can slide freely, having a metallic braid and a tube body integrated thereinto, and having substantially the same outer diameter as the bending section does.

18. (withdrawn) An endoscope system according to claim 17, wherein the insertion unit includes an attaching/detaching means for attaching the flexible tube to the guide tube so that the flexible tube can be freely detached from the guide tube.

19. (withdrawn) An endoscope system according to claim 18, wherein the attaching/detaching means is an elastic member that comes into close contact with the external surface of a base, which joins the bending section and the flexible tube, with predetermined holding force.

20. (withdrawn) An endoscope system according to claim 17, wherein a plurality of bosses whose distal portions are shaped substantially like a sphere is formed on the external surface of the tube body included in each of the guide tube and flexible tube.

21. (withdrawn) An endoscope system according to claim 17, wherein when each of the guide tube and flexible tube is formed with a plurality of tubes, adjoining ones of the tubes are joined using a pipe fitting in order to attain a predetermined length.

22. (withdrawn) An endoscope system according to claim 17, wherein: when the

guide tube is formed with a plurality of tubes having different diameters so that it will have a predetermined length, the ends of the tubes having different diameters are layered and joined so that the diameter of the guide tube will diminish from the proximal end thereof to the distal end thereof.

23. (withdrawn) An endoscope system according to claim 17, wherein: when the guide tube is formed with a plurality of tubes having different diameters and different lengths so that it will have a predetermined length, the proximal ends of the tubes are located at the same position so that the diameter of the guide tube will diminish from the proximal end thereof to the distal end thereof.

24. (withdrawn) An endoscope system according to claim 17, wherein:
the insertion unit comprises a soft bending section, a braid tube that is harder than the bending section to a predetermined extent, and a coiled tube that is harder than the braid tube to a predetermined extent; and
the bending section, braid tube, and coiled tube are joined in that order from the distal end of the insertion unit.

25. (withdrawn) An endoscope system according to claim 17, wherein the bending section is formed with a fluid pressure actuator.

26. (withdrawn) An endoscope system according to claim 25, wherein:
when fluid compartments formed in a multi-lumen tube included in the fluid pressure actuator are connected to insertion unit-side tubes with stepped communication members between them, a stepwise portion is formed at the end of the multi-lumen tube in order to prevent interference among the stepped communication members that communicate with the fluid compartments.

27. (withdrawn) An endoscope system according to claim 25, wherein:
when the insertion unit-side tubes are connected to the fluid compartments formed in the

multi-lumen tube included in the fluid pressure actuator, the ends of the insertion unit-side tubes to be inserted into the fluid compartments are tapered.

28. (withdrawn) An endoscope system according to claim 25, further comprising:

a drum about which the insertion unit of the endoscope is wound, and which has a fluid pressure source that supplies a fluid to the fluid pressure actuator, and a supply-of-fluid control unit, which controls the supply of fluid from the fluid pressure source, incorporated substantially in the center thereof; and a support for holding the drum so that the drum can rotate freely.